

Matter of Fact

After Ike, The Deluge

AS EXPECTED, the Soviets have triumphantly fired another moonshot. The Pentagon's response was automatic. One of the Administration's experts in the manufacture of soothing syrup, Dr. Herbert York, hastened to announce that this country and the Soviet Union were still "essentially in the same position" in the development of ballistic missiles.

It is probably useless to say so, yet it should be noted for record that Dr. York's statement is an argument against public decimation, at least if you believe that public decency requires officials to give the public a reasonably accurate picture of the national situation. Here is the best factual forecast of what Dr. York means by "essentially the same position" in the true years of the missile gap, which lie just ahead:

1960 U. S. 30 ICBMs versus U. S. S. R. 100 ICBMs.

1961 U. S. 70 ICBMs versus U. S. S. R. 300 ICBMs.

1962 U. S. 120 ICBMs versus U. S. S. R. 1000 ICBMs.

1963 U. S. 120 ICBMs versus U. S. S. R. 1800 ICBMs.

The foregoing table contrasts the official U. S. estimates, the "national estimates," of Soviet missile capability with the missile program presented to the last Congress by the Eisenhower Administration. Over bitter protests from the Administration, the Congress provided 60 additional Atlases in 1962, and the same in 1963. The Congress also insisted on stepping up the time schedule for the solid-fuelled Minuteman ICBM, in

order to get the first of these missiles in 1963.

THERE IS a simple reason why the original administration program is given above, instead of the somewhat better program voted by Congress. Funds to finance the added ICBM production will have to be provided in the election year budget; the signs suggest that the administration will follow its usual budget-first rule, overriding Congress and setting back missile output to its original program.

Even if Congress is not overridden, moreover, the Soviet superiority in long range missile power will still be very great for a long period. The critical period will extend from 1961 until about 1966, when we shall begin to have a serious striking force with Minuteman missiles.

To these grim facts, there is more to add. In brief, consider the old missile testing base at Kapustin Yar in the bend of the Volga, the Soviets have now established a new base to the north of the Aral Sea. From the new base this summer, two full range ICBM shots were fired to impact in the Pacific. This is a departure from the Soviet practice of testing their ICBMs with such heavy instrumentation aboard that they impact after a flight of only 3500 miles. The shots this summer knocked out the complacent argument of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Nathan Twining, that the Soviets probably did not have ICBMs capable of going the full intercontinental range.

In these circumstances, powerful influences in the Pentagon are actually launching a campaign to write down the intelligence estimates once again. The pretext is the relative smallness of the Soviet ICBM testing program

— only about 20 Soviet ICBMs have been fired to date. The real aim of course is to cut ICBM appropriations, in order to make room for Army and Navy spending of other types. Fortunately, the CIA director, Allen W. Dulles, seems likely to resist this new exercise in self-delusion.

IT IS self-deluding, in any case, to use the national intelligence estimates as we are now using them. They are not and cannot be sacred and absolute measures of Soviet performance. The estimating machinery has certainly been much improved in the last couple of years.

CIA Director Dulles and his staff have worked endlessly to eliminate the factors that produce the exaggerated forecasts on the optimistic side. Yet it is admitted by the estimators themselves that they cannot yet be precise. The Soviet development of ICBMs is probably only half as far as we understand it to be. The ICBM program is not yet a total success, but it is a success.

The problem is not in such a disposition plan for obvious. The problem is the lack of development plan, and even if Congress had not overridden the budget-cut plan, the missile program is due to be very serious indeed in the years from 1961 through 1965 or 1966. On this point, the figures speak for themselves. It is also necessary to remember the extraordinary arrogance Nikita S. Khrushchev has so often shown in the last 18 months.

If this is how Khrushchev believes now, how will he behave when the U. S.-U. S. S. R. long-range missile ratio is 10 to 1 in favor of the Kremlin? Apparently the Administration's answer to this question is: "After Ike, the deluge."

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